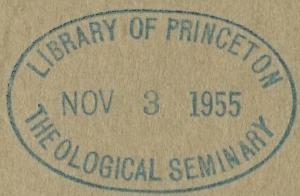


Francis J. Schroeder

Père Lagrange and
Biblical Inspiration

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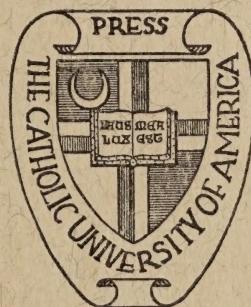
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A DISSERTATION

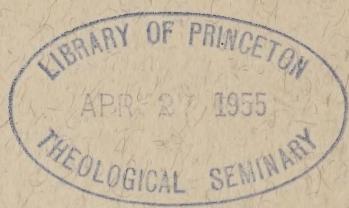
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PÈRE LAGRANGE AND BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

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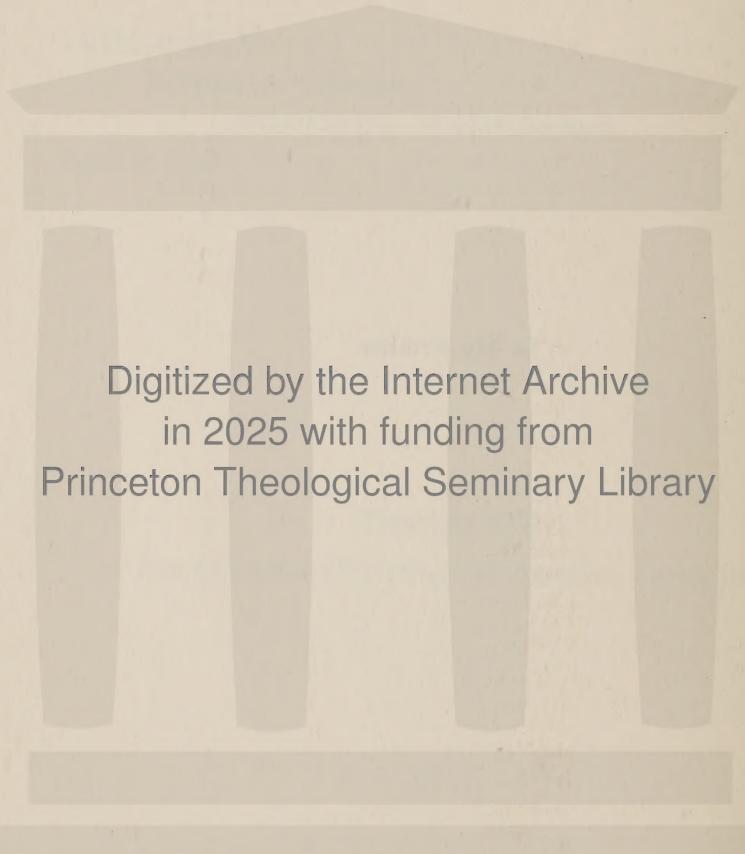
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PREFACE

This brochure represents part of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Sacred Theology of the Catholic University of America. The typewritten copies of the complete work are available at the library of this institution. That the scope of this dissertation may be ascertained we shall present here the table of contents of the complete work, together with a brief survey of those parts which are not contained in this brochure.¹

Table of Contents :

- *Chapter I. Introduction.
- Chapter II. Historical Setting.
- Chapter III. The Nature of Inspiration.
- Chapter IV. Verbal Inspiration.
- *Chapter V. Inspiration and Exegesis.
 - *A. Aim of Inspiration.
 - *B. Method of Divine Teaching.
 - C. History of the Bible.
 - D. Divine-humanness of the Sacred Scriptures.
- *Chapter VI. Influence of Lagrange
- *Bibliography.

Chapter II details the historical setting for Lagrange's work on biblical inspiration. "A return to the Fathers, rightly understood" is the first and most earnest plea of P. Lagrange. The Fathers taught a real twofold authorship of the Bible; there was a total divine authorship and a total human authorship. "A return to the principles of St. Thomas" is the second plea of P. Lagrange. As a result, a distinction should be made between revelation and inspiration; furthermore, instrumental causality (in the Thomistic sense) should be accepted as a good explanation of the theological fact underlying inspiration. However, since neither the Fathers

¹ An asterisk marks the parts here reproduced in full.

nor St. Thomas were conscious of modern scriptural problems, there is need for a corresponding development in the theory of inspiration.

Lagrange's theory, which rises above philosophical speculations, was occasioned by a twofold influence. On the one hand, there was the modernist crisis which crystallized scientific and historical difficulties in the Bible, thereby indicating an incompatibility with inerrancy. On the other hand, there was the theory of Franzelin which tended to look upon the Bible as a series of divine affirmations revealed by God. Lagrange felt it his duty to meet the former, and correct the latter.

There were also minor immediate influences, especially the writings of Cardinal Zigliara and P. Pègues. Lagrange enlarged upon them, rectified them, and put his teaching on inspiration in contact with the Bible and biblical difficulties.

Chapter III deals with the nature of inspiration. Since much mystery shrouds the internal mechanism of inspiration, P. Lagrange went to Church documents for a solution. After examining the pertinent passages of the Councils of Florence, Trent, and Vatican, P. Lagrange became convinced that inspiration is not to be explained by the formula: "God is the author of the Scriptures," but rather, that "God as author" should be explained through the notion of inspiration. The method and progression of these Councils indicate the following order (putting the *causal* before the *caused* propositions): (a) the books of both testaments have been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; *therefore* (b) these books have God for their author; *therefore* (c) they are sacred and canonical. The starting point, then, is not "God as author," but rather, the notion itself of inspiration.

Lagrange first deals with the theological aspects of inspiration since they are of primary importance. At the outset, he clearly distinguishes between inspiration and revelation. In revelation there is new knowledge, knowingly received as divine. In revelation there is the infusion of *species*. On the other hand, no new knowledge, no divine impulse by way of suggestion, no divine stirring of previously acquired thoughts, is necessary (or even relevant) in inspiration—these belong rather to revelation.

The sacred author is led in a special way by divine Providence in the antecedent formation of concepts that are later written under the light of inspiration. In a true sense, everything is suggested by God before it is written, but it is not a suggestion that would dispense the sacred writer from all the activities necessary for a full authorship. Therefore, the sacred writer will write nothing except what God has directed to be written, yet God may not have furnished him with a single idea by way of direct suggestion. There is then a "higher concursus," whereby God (as the principal cause) completely compenetrates the sacred writer (as instrumental cause) forming together one principle of operation.

P. Lagrange details the function of both the intellect and the will in inspiration. As to the intellect, the *lumen intellectuale* affects the whole act of composition. This *lumen* not only enlightens the mind of the human author on the various elements of knowledge that are to be written in the Bible, it also (as its primary purpose) enlightens and forms the judgments (both *speculative* and *practical*) of the sacred author. As to the will, there is a mutual causality between the intellect and the will in judging. However, Lagrange does not treat distinctly of the effect of inspiration on the will apart from the effect of the *lumen* on the intellect. He rises above any philosophical speculations on the point.

The key to the divine understanding of the Scriptures is the human author. Inspiration, divinizing the affirmations of the hagiographer, works through human psychological processes. As a result, God has accommodated Himself to the genius of the sacred writer, an accommodation that is really, constitutively, and intrinsically contained in the notion of inspiration. The Bible itself proves it. The affirmation (and its degree of adhesion), then, is determined by a reconstruction, as far as possible, of the human author's life, his personality, plan, times, environment, sciences, etc. Furthermore, the various ways of teaching (by way of history, poetry, allegory, discussion, etc.) will each influence the ultimate affirmation differently.

Chapter IV treats of verbal inspiration. P. Lagrange in this matter again counsels a return to the Fathers, rightly understood. He frequently calls the theory of "sentimental inspiration," classically formulated by Franzelin, a new theory. Franzelin distin-

guished between the *res et sententiae* and the *verba*, the former belonging to God alone, the latter, with a negative divine assistance, belonging to the sacred author. Besides a probable Molinistic influence, P. Lagrange lists five reasons that led some away from the traditional view of inspiration, reasons that range from a misunderstanding of verbal inspiration (identifying it with mechanical dictation) to the attempt of putting the Vulgate on a par with the original texts.

The importance of verbal inspiration in itself should not be over-emphasized; it is simply the logical termination of an organic system of inspiration. It is not the words that count, but the sense. Therefore, inspiration extends primarily to the thoughts, and secondarily to the words insofar as they reveal the thoughts. Yet, the words are truly inspired, since God completely compenetrates the action of the sacred writer. Inspiration was given to write a book; therefore, it extends itself to the whole book, including the words.

P. Lagrange admits that there is a philosophic intrinsic difference between the thought and its expression. Inspiration, therefore, does not affect them in the same manner. Inspiration affects the judgment; therefore, the judgment must be true. Inspiration affects the term; therefore, the term must be proper.

To separate the *res et sententiae* from the *verba* would cause a divorce that is psychologically difficult to conceive. Especially would it seem impossible to trace a line of demarcation between the ideas and the words when we consider the metaphors, comparisons, poetical symbols, allegories, and oratorical amplifications found in the Bible. In the final analysis, inspiration would be restricted to the contents of certain phrases or paragraphs.

Imperfections of style do not constitute an argument against verbal inspiration. God simply uses an imperfect instrument as it is. Furthermore, the essence of inspiration hinges on the judgment and these imperfections in no way compromise that judgment. Nor do translations and versions militate against verbal inspiration. For, in these cases, the words (and frequently the *thoughts*) are equivalently inspired when there is a substantial identity between the original and the translation. P. Lagrange insists that the meaning is the important thing; verbal inspiration is but a corollary, although a necessary one in our concept of inspiration.

In Chapter V, Section C, Lagrange treats of the three kinds of history found in the Bible, a subject he approached with care and timidity: (1) the novel (used to serve as a vehicle to inculcate some truth or to edify); (2) real history (approximate accuracy is all that is demanded and possible); (3) history of origins (the use of legends or national and popular metaphors). In the 'history of origins' (the one of especial interest), Lagrange insists upon a metaphorical instead of an allegorical interpretation so as to maintain the substance of the narrative. Unless there are sufficiently strong reasons to the contrary, all history is to be put in the second class.

In Section D, Lagrange discusses five topics (relating to the Pentateuch and its Mosaic origin) to illustrate the 'human familiarity' of the Divine Book. (1) According to oriental composition, a book is a community project, both as to its thought and its writing. There is development (successive redactions) in line with its social progress. Therefore, in judging an oriental book, we must not use modern, but rather oriental, standards. (2) There have not only been successive redactions (as in 1), there have also been successive legislations, following the laws of normal growth common to all organizations. In the Bible, we find the divine evolution of a divine law (which was not definitive). "God said to Moses" indicates that the law is of divine and Mosaic origin. However, the Jewish priesthood, as the hierarchy of the Jewish socio-religious commonwealth, had the right to develop the primitive Mosaic law. "God said to Moses" would be a legitimate phrase used by the priesthood to designate that the law (enlarged upon and accommodated) was divine and written in the spirit of the original Mosaic dispensation. (3) "Moses has written" has the same value as "God said to Moses." The redactor put the name of Moses to what legitimately developed from him. (4) Tradition is unanimous in maintaining the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In this section, Lagrange makes the necessary distinction between *historic* tradition and *literary* tradition. That Mosaism is basic to the entire history of the people of God (historic tradition) must be conceded. That Moses has drawn up the Pentateuch as we now have it (literary tradition) is hardly admissible. (5) The relation between history and the use of documents is here discussed. Besides giving

his own theory on the documents (J E D P), he enlarges on the value of P (the Priestly Code). The critics say that this document has altered the truth; it has generalized, systematized, and idealized history. Lagrange counters by linking P with an Ezechielan movement, whereby historical facts already recorded in the Bible are symbolized and idealized. This would be similar to the oriental use of (a) the "history of origins," (b) numbers, and (c) chronologies. Therefore, in P there is a twofold element: the truth taught, and the literary genre to clothe it. The historical foundations are true but the accidental forms to portray these foundations are not taught as truths in themselves; they are, as it were, formulae of the truth, more or less precise.

* * * * *

The author takes this opportunity to thank those who have assisted him in the preparation of this work: Rev. Joseph Lilly, C.M.,¹ S.T.D., S.S.L., for suggesting the topic of dissertation; Rev. Edward Siegman, C.P.P.S., S.T.D., and Rev. Pascal Parente, J.C.B., Ph.D., S.T.D., for their judicious criticism and helpful suggestions; and especially Rev. John Weisengoff, S.T.D., S.S.L., under whose direction the present dissertation was written.

¹ Father Lilly died on March 21, 1952. (Cf. *CBQ* 16 [1952], 262.)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on Père Lagrange; much remains still to be written. His permanent place among the savants of the ages has not yet been determined, though his influence, as we shall indicate, has been patently tremendous. For a just appraisal of his views on matters scriptural, including the interaction and interrelation between his notions on inspiration and exegesis,¹ we must understand some of his difficulties and some of the influences exerted upon him. There were physical difficulties, for instance, framed within the tempestuous crisis of modernism, that would have crushed and extinguished a lesser light. Misunderstandings, too, leading to accusations of modernism came from within, while accusations of cowardice in splitting his "allegiance" came from without, the Church. Furthermore, the very demands themselves of his age induced him to prove that biblical criticism could flourish within the Church.

In order to get proper perspective, let us briefly review the more important events of his life, showing how the providential ways of God helped form this spiritual and intellectual giant, who one day may take his place among the truly great.

A biographical sketch. Albert Lagrange was born on the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, March 7, 1855, in Bourg-en-Bresse.² After fundamental schooling in his native village, he was sent to Autun for his classical education.³ When he had finished his studies in

¹ We must bear in mind that P. Lagrange had no strictly aprioristic views on inspiration. His purpose was to determine exegesis by the traditionally accepted view of inspiration and to determine inspiration by the demands of exegesis.

² For the early life of Lagrange see Vincent, *RB* 47 (1938), 321-328.

³ P. Lagrange always had a penchant for a study of the humanities. Providentially, it was certainly desirable that the new founder of biblical science should be a "humanist," one who could join the ancient with the modern in a delicate appreciation of "humanity."

Incidentally, it was in Autun where Lagrange memorized the Gospel of St. Luke (cf. *RB* 4 [1895], 63).

the humanities, he went to Paris to study law. Five years later, on July 6, 1878, he obtained the degree of Doctor of Laws.⁴ However, responding to the Master's call, he entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice at Issy-les-Moulineaux, near Paris. Here an intimate acquaintance with M. Batiffol and M. Hyvernat⁵ whetted his taste for biblical studies. It was here, too, that Abbé Lagrange decided to become a Dominican. Accordingly, on October 5, 1879, Frère Marie-Joseph received the Dominican habit in the convent of St. Maximin, near Marseilles. He was ordained a priest on December 23, 1883, at Salamanca.⁶ From 1884 to 1888, P. Lagrange taught Church History and Philosophy. In the meantime, he continued his biblical studies under the Abbé Thomas at the Catholic Institute, even though it seemed his dreams of scriptural specialization were doomed. Unexpectedly, however, in 1888, P. Lagrange was sent by his superiors to study oriental languages under D. H. Muller and O. Reinisch at the University of Vienna. He remained there for three semesters—until the call of his superior brought him to his life's work.

On March 10, 1890, at the age of 35, P. Lagrange arrived at St. Étienne in Jerusalem to found a Palestinian biblical school.⁷

⁴ His knowledge of law served him well in Scripture, especially in his studies on the evolution of law in the Pentateuch.

⁵ Hyvernat later (in 1889) accepted an invitation to join the faculty of the newly founded Catholic University in Washington. He died on May 29, 1941.

⁶ On October 6, 1880, the religious orders were banished from France. As a result, Lagrange followed his theological studies at the Dominican convent at the University of Salamanca and was there ordained.

It was at Salamanca that he was influenced by and influenced two men especially: P. Cormier, an example of a happy combination of intense contemplation and energetic practicality, later becoming General of the Order, who encouraged Lagrange in his work, never doubting his orthodoxy; the second man was P. Colchen, who was responsible for sending Lagrange to Vienna for oriental studies and also to Jerusalem.

It was also at Salamanca that Lagrange became proficient in Hebrew.

⁷ He found there a tiny community of old and sickly priests. There was no library, except the Bible and a Holy Land guide book which P. Lagrange brought with him, no academic material, nor any resources to supply them. The weather, too, was considered as hardly conducive to serious scientific work.

It was here that he spent practically the rest of his life, 45 years in all, until his death in France on March 10, 1938. It was here he dedicated himself to the formation of his students, to personal research and to the composition of scientific works.⁸

The historical method. Shortly after his arrival, P. Lagrange set out from Jerusalem on an extended tour of Palestine and Transjordan. He came back a changed man, for he had seen the Bible relived, he had felt the "historical sensation." He was now ready to put his "historical method"⁹ into practice, both in the "École Practique d'Études Bibliques" (opened on November 15, 1890) and in its voice, the *Revue Biblique* (which began publication in January, 1892).

Previously, Catholic "traditional" exegesis felt itself in the peaceful possession of Sacred Scripture; it considered only the transcendent nature of the Bible, endowed with a divine infallibility for every least sentence. In the historical narratives or the genealogies of the Patriarchs, in the statement of some purely natural fact—all was divinely true. Such an attitude put exegesis at the mercy of a contradicting evolution of human knowledge. Rationalism eagerly claimed the results of archeological investigations, revealing astounding civilizations in the ancient East. These served as weapons to destroy Sacred History. P. Lagrange, convinced that there can be no conflict between science and the Bible, took, not the defensive, but the offensive. He used the same methods, the same scientific criticism as the Rationalists; he faced facts.¹⁰ Yet, he did so, grounded on faith, to prove the truth and worth of the Bible by determining its meaning in its historical, social, religious, and intellectual milieu, through the "historical method."

⁸ P. Lagrange has made some 1786 scriptural contributions, including books, articles, and reviews!

⁹ The "historical method" endeavored to reconstruct the author's life, ideas, milieu, etc., through the simultaneous collaboration of philology, archeology, geography, ethnography—in fact, anything to form the historical setting, so that the true judgment affirmed by God through the human authors may be ascertained.

¹⁰ He was condemned from the beginning for this method, so like that of higher critics. Cf. F. M. Braun, *L'Oeuvre du Père Lagrange* [Fribourg, 1943], pp. 99-100.)

P. Lagrange appeals especially to St. Jerome, the scripture scholar par excellence, as the real founder of his historical method.

C'est à S. Jérôme qu'il réserve de poser le principe libérateur. . . . Nous n'avons pas entrepris un examen complet des théories des Pères sur l'Écriture. Nous n'avions pas à rappeler ceux d'entre eux qui semblent avoir fait de l'écrivain sacré un instrument passif. Et cep., même parmi ceux que (qui?) nous avons allégués, n'avons-nous pas rencontré la trace d'une certaine confusion entre la révélation et l'inspiration? Jusqu'où ne devaient pas aller les égards pour la dictée de l'Esprit-Saint, ce culte des sons, des mots, des syllabes, cette attention à ne pas négliger un iota, à trouver des sens spirituels d'autant plus nobles que le sens littéral était plus vil? Dans cette première ferveur pour la Parole de Dieu, dont nous sommes, hélas ! revenus, l'esprit scientifique de S. Jérôme s'est bien de fois heurté à des préjugés, à des routines.¹¹

The Modernist Crisis. We cannot truly understand the difficulties of Lagrange without understanding the modernist crisis, through which he passed and with which he was intimately associated, which was leaving in its wake the tragic and notorious apostasy of persons regarded as most solid and most enlightened pillars of the Faith. However, as is inevitable in troubled periods, danger was imagined everywhere. Everything not conforming to a placid lazy routine was considered suspect.

In 1902, P. Lagrange delivered a series of lectures at Toulouse embodying his "historical method,"¹² which caused a veritable tempest. In fact, the furious opposition broke out in open attack, with a general campaign against his method. Fiery articles flared up in the daily papers. However, the major superiors of the Dominicans, knowing the theological and religious integrity of Lagrange, counselled him to pay no heed to these attacks.¹³ He therefore continued his work. Yet, his adversaries were relentless.

¹¹ *Éclaircissement sur la Méthode Historique* (Paris, Lecoffre, 1905, *in manuscriptu*), #39. For the copy used in this dissertation (and quoted as above) see Richard T. Murphy, St. Rose Priory, Dubuque, Iowa.

¹² These lectures were translated into English by E. Myers, *Historical Criticism and the Old Testament* (Catholic Truth Society, London, 1906).

¹³ Cf. Vincent, *Blackfriars* (1938), 12.

On the occasion of Lagrange's submission to the *Lamentabili* (July 3, 1907) and the *Pascendi* (Sept. 7, 1907), the heresy-hunters accused him of a perfidious dissimulation, telling him to cease from laying waste the fold of Christ while still wearing the white livery of St. Dominic and celebrating Mass with a spurious show of piety!¹⁴ To make matters worse, insidious insinuations were made by the modernists, accusing him of being one of them in spirit and thought, but lacking the frank courage and heroism to split completely.

In such turbulent times, P. Lagrange, at the suggestion of his superiors, temporarily left Old Testament studies in order to concentrate his energies on the New Testament, using, however, the same historical method. Nevertheless, the heresy-hunters mercilessly pursued him, redoubling their efforts with the appearance of his *Saint Marc* in 1911.¹⁵

The Breaking Point. On June 29, 1912, a decree was issued from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, forbidding a German work of Ch. Holzhey to be used in seminaries, even as a reference book. A small phrase was attached to the end of the decree forbidding the commentaries of certain ones who wrote in a similar spirit. There then followed a parenthetical addition that caused torturous anguish to P. Lagrange: *ceu scripta plura P. Lagrange*, and gave his adversaries an excuse for unlimited exploitation.¹⁶ This was a prohibition¹⁷ not a condemnation, with the intent of

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ P. Lagrange wrote first on St. Mark, following the theory (as a working hypothesis) that Mark was a principal source of Luke and an influential source in the translation of Matthew Aramaic into Matthew Greek. (Cf. *Saint Marc* [Paris, Lecoffre, 1947], cviii-cxxv.)

¹⁶ The attacks made by his adversaries, both the heresy-hunters and the modernists, apparently did not unduly upset him. The words of P. de Grandmaison were true for Lagrange: "What does it matter if our reputation is strewn about, along the road where Truth passes." However, when the Church, or at least one of its organizations, which previously had always sanctioned and protected him, prohibited his works, P. Lagrange was truly smitten and almost broken.

¹⁷ This prohibition came from the Consistorial Congregation and not from the Holy Office; hence there is no question of orthodoxy involved. There has never been a formal condemnation of any work or proposition of La-

safeguarding young and unformed seminarians from searching analyses and discussions of dangerous modern theories.¹⁸ On the next day, June 30, Lagrange wrote a touching letter of total submission to the Holy See. He resolved, with the permission of his superiors, to leave Jerusalem and biblical studies. To keep on, he thought, would be to imitate Loisy.¹⁹ He was, therefore, recalled to France on September 1, 1912, where he did parish work and some historical and oriental archeological research.²⁰ However, Pope Pius X recalled him to Jerusalem a few months later, in June 1913, with orders to begin again his course in exegesis.

The World War. Scarcely had P. Lagrange returned to St. Etienne, when the first world war broke out, threatening to ruin completely the work of the École Biblique. His younger co Helpers were called to active service in the French army. The École was taken over and occupied by the Turks, Lagrange himself was arrested, and saved only through the intervention of Pope Benedict XV. Pope Benedict personally interceded for him with the Emperor Franz Josef, who in turn brought pressure upon the Turkish authorities. During this period (1914-1918), P. Lagrange manned the *Revue Biblique* almost single-handed, publishing, in the meantime, five famous books! It was during this time, too, that he suffered much from sickness.²¹

grange. The decree containing the prohibition was merely disciplinary, limiting the use of his writings (none is mentioned by name) to seminary professors. At any rate, this decree was abrogated by the Code of Canon Law (6, 6) in 1918. (Cf. Richard T. Murphy, tr., *Pere Lagrange and the Scriptures*, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1946, p. 216.)

¹⁸ In viewing this prohibition, we should keep in mind the turmoil caused by Modernism at this time, especially in Italian seminaries.

¹⁹ Cf. Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²⁰ For the moving and heartrending departure of Lagrange, cf. Vincent, *Blackfriars* (1938), 349. When Lagrange left he said, "Si Dieu veut que cette oeuvre vivre, c'est lui qui la fera vivre comme par le passé."

²¹ P. Lagrange, apparently, never enjoyed robust health. As a sickly child, at the age of three, he was taken to the Curé of Ars to be blessed. Some authors (e.g., Vincent, Braun) think that the saintly intercession of the Curé gave strength to Albert Lagrange, physically as well as spiritually. Be that as it may, P. Lagrange frequently tasted the purifying crucible of suffering, lending a patience necessary to a misunderstood turbulent life. (Cf. Vincent, *Blackfriars* [1938], 399.)

Peace. After the armistice, the group from the École gathered around Lagrange for twenty years of most intensive work. These were the happiest of his life. During this period, he penned his great Gospel commentaries, climaxing his studies on Hellenism and Judaism with *L'Évangile de Jésus-Christ*.²² His writings were mostly not part of a preconceived plan, as we shall later indicate, but were occasioned by the need for the Church to combat prevalent errors sponsored by the Modernists.

Lagrange and Loisy. If we did not have a Loisy, perhaps we would never have had so great a Lagrange. Loisy's efforts for progress and "liberalism" both challenged Lagrange and sparked him on to new efforts.

It cannot be denied that Loisy was a brilliant intellectual and was recognized as such by Lagrange, a brilliant light dedicated to progress and humanitarianism, but without real faith.²³ Lagrange, too, was dedicated to human progress and its fuller comprehension, but within the traditional limits of the Church and grounded on a strong unshakable faith.²⁴

Lagrange's writings in part follow a pattern of rebuttal of Loisy, but a rebuttal whereby he would use Loisy's type of argument in re-examining the traditional doctrines of the Church in the light of historical criticism, with the purpose of indicating the soundness of these traditional doctrines.²⁵ Lagrange would take, for instance,

²² "The letter of Cardinal Pacelli acknowledging in the name of the Pope, Pius XI, the receipt of a copy of *L'Évangile*, and which is reproduced on page iv of the 1936 printing, was considered by many in Europe to be a declaration that the last vestiges of suspicion had been removed from the name of P. Lagrange." (Cf. Richard T. Murphy, "Memorial-Lagrange," *CBQ* 3 [1941], 142.)

²³ Apparently Loisy had already lost his faith (i.e. faith as we understand it) by 1883, or before, even though the open rupture with the Church did not come until 1908. In the meantime, he used the Church as the best organization whereby he could spread his radical "liberalism," borrowed for the most part from German philosophers and higher critics. (Cf. Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 488 ff.)

²⁴ Lagrange was thoroughly imbued with a Christian philosophy of life, by which a more complete development of the individual and of society is to be realized.

²⁵ In "Loisy et Modernisme" (*RB* 12 [1903], 292-313, P. Lagrange rejects any dependence upon Loisy.

from Loisy whatever appeared especially reasonable and advantageous to him (Loisy), would correct it and with the help of criticism itself, defend both the Scriptures and the Faith.²⁶ Lagrange was concerned with ideas, no matter where he found them; he rarely judged persons.²⁷

Although Loisy's works frequently roused Lagrange's pen to action, for our purposes let us consider incidents directly related to inspiration.

Loisy and Inspiration. Fundamental to an exegetical study of the Bible is one's view of inspiration. Loisy exposed his views, therefore, on biblical inspiration as early as 1893, in which he made his position clear. The Bible, according to Loisy, is full of errors, not only in matters of science and history but even from the point of view of doctrine. The biblical question, he concluded, was not simply a theoretical discussion; it was above all a question of historical criticism. His conclusion is this: "Elle ne consiste pas à savoir s'il y a des erreurs dans la Bible, elle consiste à savoir ce que la Bible contient de vérité."²⁸ These views were similar to those of Renan, Loisy's influential teacher from 1882-1885, views which were his apologia for leaving the Church.

Les doctrines catholiques les plus mitigées sur l'inspiration, ne permettent d'admettre dans le texte sacré aucune erreur caractérisée, aucune contradiction, même en des choses qui ne concernent ni la foi ni les moeurs. Or, mettons que, parmi les mille escarmouches que se livrent la critique et l'apologétique orthodoxe sur les détails du

²⁶ Cf. Chaine, "The Old Testament—Semitism" in *Père Lagrange and the Scriptures*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁷ This is well illustrated in the following incident recorded in *Le Figaro*, April 12, 1929, by Louis Bertrand: "Je lui apportais des objections de Renan. Non seulement il tenait le plus grand compte de ces raisons de l'adversaire, mais il y ajoutait, si je puis dire, il les fortifiait dans mon esprit, en bon soldat de la vérité, qui n'a pas peur de la regarder en face. Et puis, il me donnait ses raisons à lui, raisons pleines de finesse et de bon sens et qui me paraissaient toujours les plus sages." (Cf. Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 23.)

His sympathy towards ideas, as well as justice towards Loisy, stems perhaps partly from the unjust condemnations he had received.

²⁸ *Mémoires*, Vol. 1 (1857-1900), Paris: Nourry, 1930, p. 260.

texte prétendu sacré, il y en ait quelques-uns où, par contre fortuite et contrairement aux apparences, l'apologétique ait raison: il est impossible qu'elle ait raison mille fois dans sa gageure, et il suffit qu'elle ait tort une seule fois pour que la thèse de l'inspiration soit mise à néant. Cette théorie de l'inspiration, impliquant un fait surnaturel, devient, impossible à maintenir en présence de idées arrêtées du bon sens moderne. Un livre inspiré est un miracle. Il devrait se présenter dans des conditions où aucun livre ne se présente.²⁹

Lagrange rose to the defense. He admitted, however, with Loisy, that inspiration must not simply be a theological discussion; it must take historical criticism into consideration. Lagrange concluded, therefore, that more than just an *a priori* theory was needed; we must look critically at the Bible itself and fit the conclusions in a traditionally accepted theory of inspiration.³⁰

In the Loisy-Lagrange drama, an unhappy coincidence occurred in 1902. *La Méthode Historique* of Lagrange and *l'Évangile et l'Église* of Loisy³¹ were published at the same time. Many reviewers linked them as a conspiracy against the Church.³² Lagrange was accused of modernism, a "loup camouflé sous une toison de brebis,"³³ an "esprit funeste."³⁴ Yet P. Lagrange, obedient to his work and purpose, went on without justifying himself, without wasting precious time in sterile controversy.³⁵

²⁹ *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* (Paris, Michel Lévy Frères, 1893), pp. 294-295.

³⁰ The views of Loisy and Renan were certainly not the only reasons why P. Lagrange wrote articles on biblical inspiration, but they are contributory. Lagrange's articles stand as a reaction against Franzelin, too, and as a correction of P. Pègues. (Cf. Chapter II.)

³¹ Loisy's purpose was to show the difference between the Christ of faith and the Christ of history.

³² Cf. Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

³³ Cf. Vincent, *RB* 47 (1938), 344.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

³⁵ P. Delattre wrote a 380 page attack on Lagrange: *Autour de la question biblique: Une nouvelle école d'exégèse et les autorités qu'elle invoque* (Liege, 1904). Because of this attack, Lagrange thought it necessary to explain himself in his *Éclaircissement sur la méthode historique, à propos d'un livre du R. P. Delattre S.J.* (At the suggestion of his superiors, this appeared in manuscript only, in 1906; cf. footnote on p. 4.

Lagrange and the Church. The life of Lagrange was a life dedicated to the Church, the “pillar and ground of truth.” His tender devotion to her is frequently manifest in his writings. He was her scholar-warrior, perfectly and totally submissive to her,³⁶ not only in matters of faith and morals, but in everything that safeguards the deposit of faith.

Assurément le droit de l’Église n’est pas restreint aux dogmes de foi dans l’interprétation de l’Écriture. Il est à peine utile de dire que son droit ne peut être moindre sur ce domaine qu’ailleurs: il s’étend donc dans l’interprétation de l’Écriture à tout ce qu’exige la conservation du dépôt de la foi qui lui est confié. Par conséquent, l’exégète est soumis à l’autorité de l’Église dans toutes ses interprétations. De plus, si l’Église se prononce, il est impossible qu’elle se trompe sur l’étendue de son pouvoir.³⁷

Sacred Scripture “est un dépôt confié à l’Église, qui seule peut déterminer jusqu’où s’étend son contrôle.”³⁸

In all his undertakings, P. Lagrange looked to the Church for guidance and confirmation.³⁹ For instance, the starting point of his notion of inspiration, as we shall see, stems from an examination of the teachings and clarification by the Councils. His *École Biblique*, furthermore, had the *Providentissimus Deus* as confirmation :

Conserver la doctrine de l’inérrance de la Bible et chercher la solution des difficultés dans une exégèse à la fois traditionnelle et progressive, tel était le programme exposé dans l’avant-propos de cette *Revue*; il semble

³⁶ This was the basic difference between Lagrange and Loisy. Loisy’s submissions to the Holy See (before the actual rupture) were possibly sincere, but they were submissions to a Church which he thought would become “enlightened” with Hegelian thought, adapted to the modern age (Cf. I. Heiler, *Alfred Loisy, Der Vater des Katholischen Modernismus*, München, E. Reinhardt, 1947), pp. 169-198.

³⁷ *RB* 9 (1900), 138.

³⁸ *RB* 1 (1892), 2.

³⁹ That is why the decree mentioning the prohibition of some of his works in 1912 was so heartrending to him.

qu'il est conformé à celui que l'Encyclique développe avec autorité.⁴⁰

Further, the interpretation of Scripture is placed completely in the domain of the Church.⁴¹

Conclusion: In this short survey of the life of Lagrange, we notice how, in God's providential ways, he was formed into spiritual and intellectual maturity for the defense of the Church. His education, comprising his studies of the humanities (so necessary for the work he did in his age), his contact with law (which was of exegetical value in the Old Testament), and especially his searching studies in almost all phases of scriptural pursuits, culminated in a competency that is rarely found. His physical difficulties, including his illnesses, together with the handicaps in starting the *École Biblique* on the proverbial shoestring, engendered both the patience and the initiative so necessary for the truly great. His patience, furthermore, was fostered by the frequent misunderstandings and severe attacks of his adversaries, reaching almost the breaking point in a prohibition by the Church for seminarians to consult his works. His contact, too, with the modernist crisis necessitated a penetrating and searching analysis of the truly traditional in its relation to modern demands.

Finally, his great and voluminous writings, written under a multiplicity of tensions, show the genius of a remarkable man. Needless to say, however, time did not permit Lagrange to carefully plan and logically arrange all his articles. This is true especially of his works on inspiration. We have endeavored, therefore, to collect those works and arrange them into a systematic whole, with emphasis on the nexus between inspiration and exegesis, as insisted upon by Lagrange.

The French of P. Lagrange is difficult. In some places it is quite inelegant; in other places it is subject to misinterpretation. On one occasion P. Lagrange was asked why he did not rework his articles more thoroughly and more clearly. He answered: "A soldier in battle has not time to clean his gun!"

⁴⁰ Cf. *RB* 1 (1892), 1 ff.

⁴¹ Cf. "L'Interprétation de la Sainte Écriture par l'Église," *RB* 9 (1900), 135-142.

CHAPTER V

INSPIRATION AND EXEGESIS

P. Lagrange had two requirements for a satisfactory theory of inspiration. A theory of inspiration must be thoroughly rooted in Catholic tradition, so that the principles of faith are satisfied,¹ as well as sufficiently broad to prove satisfactory to the exegete.² It is with this latter item that we are primarily concerned in this chapter. P. Lagrange studied the problem of inspiration not only in theory but ever and always with his eye focused on the Bible and its interpretation. There is, in practice, an inseparable bond between the doctrine of inspiration and exegesis, regulating and determining each other.

Few explicit statements are made by Lagrange on this point. We have attempted, however, to arrange and synthesize them into an organic whole. In treating of the relation between inspiration and exegesis, we shall confine ourselves especially to two main points: (a) the aim of inspiration, and (b) the method of divine teaching.

The Aim of Inspiration: A Recording. To understand the relation between inspiration and exegesis, the aim of inspiration is of utmost importance. If we only knew the exact relation in which inspiration stood to divine teaching, a great result would be achieved, P. Lagrange tells us.³ In this, he wisely counsels, it is not our business to decide what God must have done, or what it was fitting for Him to do; ours is to humbly note whatever forms a part of His work.⁴ We must argue from biblical facts.

¹ The former requirement was treated of in Chapter III.

² "Pourtant il serait du plus haut intérêt de montrer dans la tradition catholique, depuis les Pères jusqu'à Léon XIII, une doctrine sur l'inspiration assez sûre pour donner satisfaction aux principes de la foi, assez large pour offrir à l'exégète des ressources suffisantes." (RB 5 [1896], 200.)

³ *Historical Criticism and the Old Testament*, trans. by E. Myers (London, 1906), p. 98. We shall hereafter refer to this book simply under the title of *Historical Criticism*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91; cf. also RB 5 (1896), 468.

"Inspiration leads to a writing whose aim is to *fix* and *record* previously acquired knowledge."⁵ This is perhaps the most important contribution of Lagrange in his analysis of the aim of inspiration; its consequences are far reaching:

(a) It follows that the grace of inspiration has as its *primary* object not to teach, but rather to preserve the memory of the stages of revealed truths and the historical facts which enable the order and sequence of revelation to be understood.

(b) It follows also that the doctrine contained in an inspired book need not be perfect in its literal and historical meaning. God determined to preserve the memory of the imperfect ideas men had of the divinity in this history of man's salvation.⁶ He does not teach us to accept those imperfect ideas in the form in which they are expressed nor does He want us to be satisfied with them. They are preserved to form a composite record, manifesting the gradual moral and dogmatic development which culminates in Christ, the pleroma.⁷ This is a delicate, though it seems a necessary, conclusion. A misunderstanding of inspiration along these lines has caused some critics to deny the inspiration (in the Catholic sense) of Sacred Scripture. Oesterley,⁸ for example, says that the belief in the "plenary"⁹ inspiration up until the 18th century "necessarily

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁶ We find inferior sentiments expressed in the Bible (e.g. "a tooth for a tooth, eye for eye" [Ex. 21, 24; Deut. 19, 21]). These sentiments no doubt are practical enough, yet they certainly lack the exquisite delicacy of Christian virtue. The meaning is often spiritualized through the injection of Christian concepts.

⁷ By this we mean that the various stages in the religious history of mankind form a *récit*, a history that is directly and supernaturally guided by God to lead to the ultimate and definitive stage—the messianic age inaugurated by Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of all truth, dogmatic and moral. (Cf. Eph. 1, 23; 4, 13; Col. 1, 19; 2, 9-10.) Cf. especially J. Schil登berger, *Vom Geheimnis Des Gotteswortes* (Heidelberg: F. Kerle Verlag, 1950), pp. 56-69. Cf. also *infra*, pp. 23-27 under the spiritual sense.

⁸ W. O. E. Oesterley, "Exegesis of the Old Testament," *Record and Revelation*, ed. by H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 417.

⁹ Oesterley, by "plenary" inspiration, refers to a Protestant notion of the definitiveness and immutability of Scriptural truth as God's word, stemming from inspiration. This notion would logically be equivalent to a Catholic view that looks upon inspiration *primarily* as a grace to teach.

implied the absence of any inner development in the Bible, it paralyzed the search for historical truth!"

(c) It likewise follows that we are not wedded to a definite stage in a dogmatic and moral development which was of an essential nature in the Old Testament. We have, as it were, a "dynamic record of a dynamic God" whose Providence has directed and *progressively*¹⁰ manifested His Will and purpose.¹¹ In this sphere, both history and nature are in the unity of His absolute control.

(d) A final corollary is the fact that revealed religion is not primarily a religion of a book. A record of this kind presupposes and demands the living voice of tradition, although tradition may use this record.

Besides these corollaries stemming from Lagrange's concept of the aim of inspiration, there are several basic notions, corroborative of our thesis.

Inspiration and Spiritual Content. The *lumen intellectuale*,¹² it is true, may vary according to the needs of the hagiographer. What must be admitted, however, is that there is no direct causal relation between inspiration and the spiritual content of a book written by the sacred author. The spiritual content, which may be more elevating in non-inspired books,¹³ is antecedent in origin to the charism of inspiration. The sublime Christology of St. Paul, for instance, did not result from the grace of inspiration. St. Paul had those exalted notions long before he ever thought of incorporating them in a letter. The grace of inspiration would primarily consist in recording these previous concepts for divine purposes.

*The distinction between Revelation and Inspiration.*¹⁴ The es-

¹⁰ J. Hempel, "The Forms of Oral Tradition," *Record and Revelation*, *op. cit.*, p. 30. "The Old Testament . . . (*is*) an epic of salvation, showing the living process of God's revelation through Israel" (Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3 [Edinburgh: Clark, 1900], p. 604).

¹¹ "What Scripture especially illustrates from its first page to its last is God's Providence" (John H. Newman, *Grammar of Assent* [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903], p. 57).

¹² Cf. p. 42, note 14 of the complete dissertation.

¹³ Cf. p. 44, note 39 of the complete dissertation.

¹⁴ Cf. pp. 26-28 of complete dissertation.

sential difference between Revelation and Inspiration is basic to this notion of Inspiration terminating in a record. It is not God speaking *ex se* but *per alium* in a unique way. God is not thundering earthward immutable divine truths. Rather is He speaking truths that are colored by the human affirmation of His hagiographer (which are divine affirmations through the charism of inspiration), according to His purpose.

But are we on thoroughly solid ground? Are there definite explicit indications and proofs in the Scriptures themselves that warrant our position? If so, what is the relation between inspiration and teaching? These are two items that demand further analysis.

*The Inspired Writings as Recordings: In the New Testament.*¹⁵ In a certain sense, every book is a recording of its author's thoughts. We are not speaking of the Books of the Bible as such a record. Rather, we are concerned with them as a group of books indicating a register of the various stages of an oral tradition that God used and guided (in O.T. times) in the preparation for the definitive New Testament era.

We shall first deal with the New Testament since it is there that we find more abundant indications to substantiate our thesis. In general, we may say that the teaching of the New Testament is a digest of essential catecheses in the early Church, demanded by occasional need of clarification.

The Gospels, as we find them, primarily are records of incidents in our Lord's historical life, which presuppose, at least in general, a set form in oral tradition. The facts reported in the Gospel history formed the staple of the apostolic preaching. These facts were communicated orally in the earliest years, based on the *vox Christi*, years before any book of the New Testament was written. As long as the apostles lived and the Church did not extend beyond the reach of their personal instruction, there would be no necessity of committing these facts to writing. With the passage of time and the growth of the Church, however, these

¹⁵ It would be beyond our scope to take each book of the Bible and detail the items (both literary and historical) which would indicate a recording. We shall simply glean some general evidences sufficient to prove our thesis.

apostolic messages, which must have tended to assume a fixed traditional form or forms, were committed to writing.¹⁶

St. Luke in his prologue explicitly refers to the labors, the consultation, and the study of sources in compiling his narrative record.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to draw up a narrative concerning the things that have been fulfilled among us, even as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I also have determined, after following up all things carefully from the very first, to write for thee . . . an orderly account.

This text certainly presupposes a basic oral tradition which ultimately St. Luke has recorded for his own purposes.

Christ's attitude towards the ceremonial law corroborates the idea of the Bible as a record. For example, in Mark 7, 1-23, we find that the distinction between clean and unclean foods, a distinction that plays a large part in the Levitical law, is abrogated. It is not that the commandments of men contradict the commandments of God; rather it substantiates our thesis that Scripture details the various stages in the development of revelation. All the stages are true in their purpose; all have God as their author.¹⁷

Furthermore, our Lord tells us that Moses (and God) permitted divorce because of the hardness of the hearts of the Hebrews.¹⁸

¹⁶ This does not mean that the Gospels immediately followed upon oral tradition without any other intermediate sources—writers on the synoptic problem would not endorse that. (Cf. J. M. Barton, "Introduction," in *Matthew, Mark and Luke* by Dom John Chapman [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937], xiii-xxiii.) What is to be maintained, however, is that in the inspiration-teaching relation (and that fundamentally is our only concern) the Gospels record doctrines of a church based on oral tradition. Hence, later doctrinal developments of a living church are not excluded.

¹⁷ Because of a misunderstanding of the primary purpose of inspiration, Ezra Gould writes. "Plainly, then, the distinction between the word of God and the word of man has to be carried within the Scripture, and used in the analysis of its contents. The thing that Jesus calls a word of man here is found also in the Old Testament itself, and is fundamental in the Levitical law." (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [ICC] [New York: Scribner, 1903], p. 133.)

¹⁸ Mt. 19, 7-8. (Cf. Deut. 24, 1-4.)

At one time, therefore, God permitted divorce but that is not His final word on the matter. Does not this likewise indicate a stage in religious development that is narrated by the Scriptures?

Many teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, it seems, must be explained in the same way: "It was written of old, *but I say unto you. . .*"¹⁹

St. John indicates that his Gospel is a record, even an incomplete one: "There are, however, many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these should be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would be written."²⁰

The Acts of the Apostles obviously is a *récit* of early Church history. Furthermore, and this is more to the point, the theology and hierarchical setup presuppose an oral tradition which dovetails and repeats what is reported in other New Testament books.²¹

St. Paul, in several instances, simply recalls his former teaching. A doctrine, however, written to a certain church is not necessarily a new doctrine. Rather, it is a recording of an apostolic teaching or of a previous Pauline concept.

The most explicit text of Scripture, however, is found in Heb. 1, 1: "God, who at sundry times²² and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son." This text very definitely manifests the fact that there are various stages of God's teaching. These stages are evidently not immutable in the Old Testament. How else, then, can they be God's teaching except by way of a unique record, a teaching adapted to a given age?

The Apocalypse, as a prophetical writing, is a record of the revelations given to St. John. Furthermore, the Apocalypse, as a teaching, records doctrines already taught in the early Church, arranged in an apocalyptic style.²³

¹⁹ Mt. 5, 17-44.

²⁰ Jo. 21, 25.

²¹ Cf. E. Jacquier, *Histoire des livres du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1928), pp. 88-92.

²² The Greek (*polumerōs*) means, "in many portions," thereby indicating the fragmentary and incomplete scope of the revelations.

²³ A. Gelin, "Apocalypse," in *La Sainte Bible*, ed. by L. Pirot (Paris, 1951), pp. 592-593.

The Inspired Writings as Recordings: In the Old Testament. Although the evidence for our thesis, at first sight, is not as abundant in the Old Testament as in the New, yet the background of the Old Testament should sufficiently bear out our conclusions.

Pre-history. The Jewish nation appears late on the scene of world history. Many nations and cultures serve as its background. It seems, for instance, that the narrative materials used by the authors of Gen. 1-11 are reworkings of old traditions, *already* harmonized by Yahwist believers with their theology.²⁴ At any rate, the Israelite prehistorian is definitely a popularizer of doctrine already accepted by tradition. The opening chapters of Genesis, therefore, fix and record this tradition, probably by way of "typical occurrences," and as a *genus litterarium*.²⁵

The Torah. Basic to an understanding of the Old Testament as a record is the background of the word *torah*. The word etymologically means "to point out" (Gn 46, 28) or "to direct" (Jg 13, 8). Its root is seen in Mic 3, 11, "the priests *teach* for hire." That which they taught was a "torah," a decision. In long succession the prophets blame the priests for their failure to *teach* (Os 4, 6; Za 3, 4; Jer 2, 8; Ez 22, 26; Mal 2, 8-9). That such decisions included moral as well as ritual teaching is clear from Os 4, 6-8 compared with vv. 1 and 2.²⁶ Mal 2, 7 says, "they should seek the *torah* at his mouth."

The government of early Semitic life was largely administered by means of *toroth*, i.e. authoritative decisions, delivered by chief or judge, who gave his verdict upon the basis of custom or precedent.²⁷ A picture of such an administration, actually conducted by Moses on such lines, is recorded in the narrative of Ex 18, 13-27. Decisions given in this way, especially on difficult questions (cf. Ex 18, 26), would naturally form precedents for future use; and thus an increasing body of civil and criminal law would gradually evolve.

²⁴ Cf. the interesting article by Roderick A. F. Mackenzie, "Before Abraham was . . .," *CBQ* 15 (1953), 131-140, esp. p. 135.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²⁶ H. Wheeler Robinson writes: "They (the priests) were the depositaries of traditional truth." ("The Philosophy of Revelation," *Record and Revelation*, *op. cit.*, p. 317.)

²⁷ Cf. J. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 66.

These *toroth* were transmitted by word of mouth.²⁸ Amplifications would necessarily ensue; superfluous elements would be dropped and only those elements would be retained which had some positive appeal to the emotions or the intellect or which would have clear pedagogical value.²⁹ It is this culled, selected *toroth* which finally was committed to writing and gave rise to most of the Pentateuch.³⁰

It should be quite obvious, therefore, that the *torah* reflects a living movement, the record of which is found in the Scriptures.³¹

In the prophets, the term (*torah*) is used of a teaching given in Yahweh's name, either by the priests or the prophets, on questions of religious or moral duty. The prophets in Is 30, 9 are called by the corresponding participle, the "directors" of the people of Jerusalem.³²

Side by side with this broader prophetical application of the term, there was the narrower one which was associated with the priests who gave oral direction in Jahweh's name. These *toroth* included prescriptions and regulations on the different kinds of

²⁸ "As has often been emphasized by scholars, writing was used in antiquity largely as an aid or guide to memory, not a substitute for it." W. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), pp. 33-34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁰ Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Philosophy of Revelation," *Record and Revelation*, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

³¹ It is disputed when the *torah* was first committed to writing. It seems, however, that the process of recording the oral *torah* was a gradual one since the laws contained in it are not homogeneous but fall into groups differing from one another in style, in contents and in scope. Furthermore, the different groups cannot be regarded as the product of a single generation, but must spring from different periods of history. Small collections of *toroth*, perhaps, on particular subjects were first written down; then these were enlarged or supplemented by others, till the final result was the body of *toroth* embedded in our present Pentateuch. Cf. Lagrange, "Les Sources du Pentateuque," *RB* 7 (1898), 10-32.

³² Other examples of the same general sense of 'direction': Ps 78, 1; Jb 22, 22; Prv 3, 1; 4, 2; 6, 23; 7, 2; 13, 14; 31, 26. It is also used of the 'guidance' or 'direction' to be given by Yahweh or His representative in the future messianic age, ideally expressed: Is 2, 3; Jer 31, 33; Is 42, 4; 51, 4.

sacrifice, the cases in which they were respectively to be offered, the criteria of leprosy, etc. The laity came to the priests for instruction on all such points and the answer given to them was *torah*, i.e. direction. Ag 2, 11 shows what *torah* was very clearly. The prophet is told to inquire of the priests whether in two particular cases an object becomes 'holy' or 'unclean': "Ask now *torah* of the priests." There is no article in the Hebrew.³³ The answer to the inquiries was the "direction" or *torah*.³⁴

In the process of time, *torah* came to denote a body of technical directions recorded on a given subject. In this sense it occurs in the expression, "this is the *torah* of" the burnt-offering, the cereal offering, etc.³⁵

From a cursory examination of the word *torah*, we can legitimately conclude that the 'law' originally was not a written but an oral direction which was later recorded in the Scriptures.³⁶

³³ *torah*.

³⁴ Cf. Mal 2, 6-7; Dt 17, 11; 24, 8; 33, 10; Mi 3, 11; Jer 2, 8; 18, 18; Za 3, 4; Ez 7, 26; Lam 22, 26; 44, 23; Hb 14. All these references indicate a simple oral direction. This oral *torah*, however, was regulated by certain fundamental principles in their tradition which might be neglected or violated by unfaithful priests.

³⁵ Cf. Lv 6, 9; 14, 37; 11, 46; 12, 7; 13, 59; 14, 2, 32, 54, 57; 15, 32; 26, 47; Nm 5, 29-30; 6, 13, 21; 19, 2, 14; 31, 21.

³⁶ It was not until 621, the so-called "finding of the Law," that the Jews became more or less wedded to a book, under the direction of the Scribes. There is a marked difference in the use of Scripture, both in language and thought, from this time. Jeremias, for example, is influenced by Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 12, 2 with Jer 2, 20; 3, 6.13; 17, 2; Dt 29, 19 with Jer 3, 17; 7, 24; 9, 14; 11, 8; Dt. 1, 38; 3, 28 with Jer 3, 18; 12, 14; Dt 10, 16; 30, 6 with Jer 4, 4; 9, 26; Dt 12, 11; 14, 23; 16, 6.11; 26, 2 with Jer 7, 12, etc., etc.). The authority of the law (oral in its foundation), which was the foundation of their religious life, grew greater and greater. Does not this indicate that the primary purpose of inspiration was to record and fix oral tradition for posterity, according to the designs of God?

The different and amplified narratives of the same laws (or events) should offer no difficulty to our view that Scripture primarily is a recording, since all (laws and events) is fundamentally based on various traditions, or better, is a growth and development of a divinely guided oral tradition. The additions and idealizations of what is called P, for instance, could well be the recording of an Ezechielian movement (cf. *RB* [1898], 30 ff.).

The Prophets. The prophets were the living organs of divine revelation; they were the theologians, the great preachers of Israel. They not only taught the traditional truths about God, His holiness and justice, but they railed against social and religious abuses. Their writings, however, seem to be a digest and a detailing of their more important prophecies and sayings. They are in no way meant to be chronologically or substantially complete. They are simply records, written by the prophet himself or by his followers, or compiled by later editors for various reasons. Jeremiah, for instance, 'prophesied' for some twenty years, but we have only 52 chapters detailing and recording his preaching.³⁷ Other prophets (e.g. Osee, Joel, Amos, Jonas) have only a few chapters dedicated to their life and teaching.³⁸

The Writings. It is universally acknowledged today that the teachings found in this third part of the Old Testament are a resultant, for the most part, of a selective culling of oriental wisdom that reaches back into the most ancient of times. These teachings or "sayings" were frequently endowed with a new spirit and 'baptized' into Hebrew thought.³⁹

Does not the original *liturgical* function of many Psalms, with their repetitious phrasing, indicate a primary oral recitation?⁴⁰ Furthermore, and again this is the point to be stressed, the doctrine of the Psalms is not new, nor does it appear in dogmatic form; it appears rather in a concrete form, "expressing the faith already entertained and established."⁴¹

³⁷ Cf. Chapter 36 for a proof of several editions of Jeremias.

³⁸ It must be remembered that the ancient common people were not literate. Teaching of necessity was done orally; traditions were passed on orally; Scripture is a record of some of these traditions, culled and selected through the years. (Cf. W. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42 for the reliability of oral tradition especially among the Israelites.)

³⁹ Cf. J. McGlinchey, *The Teaching of Amen-em-ope and the Book of Proverbs* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939); W. F. Albright, "The Old Testament and the Archaeology of the Ancient East," *The Old Testament and Modern Studies*, ed. by H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-47.

⁴⁰ P. Boylan, *The Psalms* (St. Louis: Herder, 1926), p. iv.

⁴¹ Briggs, *Book of Psalms* (ICC), v. 1 (New York: Scribner, 1906), p. xciv.

In looking upon the Scriptures as recording and fixing a given stage of revelation we need not ignore the distinctive purpose of the individual sacred writers in writing or the different types of literature found in the Bible. Nor need we deny or ignore dogmatic tendencies or ecclesiastical purposes of the various sources or strata, should they be definitely proved. What is imperative to affirm, however, is that the *teachings*⁴² already found in oral tradition serve as the basis and background of the writings. It is, therefore, a recording of these teachings, manifested in various ways and for various purposes.

Conclusion. Lagrange's statement: "Inspiration leads to a writing whose aim is to fix and record previously acquired knowledge" is, therefore, fully acceptable. *A priori*, the corollaries mentioned on pp. 13-14 would seem to demand it. *A posteriori*, the nature of the Bible as it is actually written, in the light of its background, justifies it.

But a difficulty arises. If the primary purpose of inspiration is to record, what is the relation between inspiration and divine teaching? This is the next item to be considered under the aim of inspiration.

Aim of Inspired Writings: Divine Teaching. In order to get proper perspective to synthesize best the results, let us review Lagrange's teaching on the senses in Scripture. The Bible has two authors, God and man. Corresponding, in a certain manner, to this double authorship, P. Lagrange speaks of a spiritual sense as well as a literal sense in Scripture. He is adamant in advocating the purely and strictly literal sense. Yet, over and above this he believed in a spiritual and "supra-literal" sense.⁴³ He follows the

⁴² We must remember that we are treating here only of the relation between inspiration terminating in a record and inspiration terminating in a teaching. For other purposes of Scripture, cf. 2 Tim 3, 15-17.

⁴³ P. Lagrange speaks of the spiritual sense in only two brief references: in *RB* 5 (1896), 505-506, and in the article, "L'interprétation de la Sainte Ecriture par l'Église," *RB* 9 (1900), 137-142, where he calls it a supra-literal sense. However, the spiritual sense and supra-literal sense are not to be completely identified. P. Lagrange's brevity makes it difficult to judge but it seems that the supra-literal sense is best understood as a part of the spiritual sense. Cf. *infra*, pp. 23-27.

Fathers in this method, but with greater precision and delineation. He interprets St. Thomas in holding that in this matter meaning is found both in the "terms" (literal sense) and in the "things" (spiritual sense).

Literal Sense. First and foremost, however, P. Lagrange insists on the strictly literal sense. Since Scripture is human, truly the fruit of the work of the sacred writer under the divine light, we must never give it another literal sense than that which the sacred writer has known and which he wants to express. P. Lagrange tells us that this is the great rule of exegesis. It is expressed by St. Augustine in two ways: "In Scripturis per homines, more hominum loquitur Deus."⁴⁴ And again,

Sacram Scripturam legentes nihil aliud appetunt quam cogitationes voluntatemque illorum, a quibus conscripta est, invenire et per illas voluntatem Dei, secundum quam tales homines locutos esse credimus.⁴⁵

To say, then, that the thoughts of Scripture are divine thoughts, that they have unsoundable depths since they emanate from absolute truth gives a false picture. Of course, we must admit that they are divine thoughts, but they are thoughts that are presented to us precisely as the sacred writer understood them and as he wished to make them known to us. *The only rule of exegesis is to penetrate the thought of the sacred writer and his intention.* God did not wish to say more to us than what the sacred writer wished to say. To add something from one's own invention to the intention of the author is to add to the thought of the Holy Spirit. The word of God is complete by itself. Therefore, for example, we must not insert a meaning in the prophecies of Isaias which Isaias could not have had nor something he did not want to teach and consequently what God did not will to put there.⁴⁶

Spiritual Sense. Besides the literal sense, with which he himself was exclusively concerned (since his was a work of defense), P. Lagrange taught a spiritual (supra-literal) sense. The Bible has

⁴⁴ *De civ. Dei*, 17, 6. (P. L. 41, col. 538.)

⁴⁵ *De doct. Christ.*, 2, 5. (P. L. 34, col. 381.)

⁴⁶ *RB* 5 (1896), 506-507.

God for its author. It follows, then, that this book is able to contain a spiritual sense, and we know that it certainly does contain it.⁴⁷

In another place, P. Lagrange tells us :

Du moment qu'on croit à l'inspiration des Écritures, il faut admettre qu'elles contiennent plus que le sens obvieux et purement littéral.⁴⁸

God draws out the events. He unrolls the ages; He knows to what part of His plan in the future a past event corresponds. In relating a first deed, He knows its importance and connection with the second. He has also given it a special meaning which He has truly willed. There is here a purely divine seal placed on the book without perhaps its redactor's suspecting it.⁴⁹ Every writer

⁴⁷ *RB* 5 (1896), 505-506.

⁴⁸ *RB* 9 (1900), 141.

⁴⁹ Since the writer does not suspect it, we are out of the domain of what moderns term *sensus plenior* (yet cf. Braun, "Le sens plenier et les encycliques," *RTh* 51 [1951], 294-304, who says God alone knows the full meaning). Lagrange maintains simply that it is *God* who knows how such and such a prophet (or other inspired author) fits in His plan to teach what is ultimately made known through a later revelation.

For information on the *sensus plenior*, cf. L. Cerfaux, J. Coppens, J. Gribomont, "Problèmes et méthode d'exégèse théologique," *Analecta Lovaniensia Biblica et Orientale* (J. Duculot, Gembloux, 1950); also its review by John P. Weisengoff in *CBQ* 14 (1952), 83-85; cf. other articles: "Les Harmonies des Deux Testaments," *NRT* 71 (1949), 337-366; J. Gribomont, "Sens Plénier, sens typique et sens littéral," *Eph Th Lov* 25 (1949), 577-587; J. Daniélou, "Les divers sens de l'Écriture dans la tradition chrétienne primitive," *Eph Th Lov* 24 (1948), 119-126; J. Coppens, "Pour une meilleure intélligence des Saintes Écritures, un nouvel essai d'herméneutique biblique," *Eph Th Lov* 27 (1951), 500-507; J. Coppens, "Nouvelles réflexions sur les divers sens des Saintes Écritures," *NRT* 74 (1952), 3-20; R. E. Brown, "The History and Development of the Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," *CBQ* 15 (1953), 141-162, in which Lagrange is accused of preparing the way for the *sensus plenior*. He misinterprets Lagrange.

Precise notions on the exact meaning of the *sensus plenior* have not yet been clearly defined; even J. Coppens himself changes his mind frequently on the *sensus plenior*. May not Lagrange's views as here presented strike a harmony? J. Weisengoff makes this wise observation: "If one should care to use the expression *sensus plenior* . . . one may define it as the 'more' which *God knows* about a certain item of revelation, a 'more' which He will add in a later revelation." (*CBQ* 14 (1952), 85.) (Italics mine.) This would fit in perfectly with Lagrange's teaching!

is held to understand *the terms* which he uses, but he is not obliged to predict what *the things* (dicta et facta) which he spoke mean in the future.

Spiritual and Supra-literal senses compared. P. Lagrange goes on to explain that the Author of the various books of the Bible is the same; therefore, we can explain one of its thoughts by another. This, strictly speaking, is the spiritual sense. Yet, we can go even further. The Revealer of tradition is the same as the Author of Scripture; the thoughts, then, of Scripture can be commented on by the truths of tradition. If we take a text by itself, we will draw from it only its purely literal meaning. If we take this text and compare it with another truth of tradition, affirmed by the same Spirit of God, we may discover a supra-literal sense in the text.⁵⁰

Yet it is the Church alone that is competent to make a judgment on the spiritual or the supra-literal sense, although it allows full freedom to its theologians.⁵¹ But would not this method lead to a multitude of arbitrary and confused interpretations? P. Lagrange answers:

Si la pensée rapprochée du texte à expliquer est vraiment tirée de l'Écriture ou de la Tradition, on aura une conclusion certaine; si c'est une pensée quelconque, nous tombons dans le caprice infini des arguties rabbiniques.⁵²

⁵⁰ This seems, in part, to be the teaching of the *Providentissimus Deus*: "Eorum (libri sacri) enim verbis, auctore Spiritu Sancto, res multae subiiciuntur, quae humanae vim aciemque rationis longissime vincunt, divina scilicet mysteria et quae cum illis continentur alia multa; idque nonnunquam ampliore quadam et reconditiore sententia, quam exprimere littera et hermeneuticae legis indicare videantur: alios praeterea sensus, vel ad dogmata illustranda vel ad commendanda praecepta vitae, ipse litteralis sensus profecto adsciscit." (EB 93)

F. Braun, in "Le sens plenier et les encycliques," *RTh* 51 (1951), 294-304, makes special use of the *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. However, the encyclical can well be interpreted in Lagrange's spiritual sense, or in the *sensus plenior* as described (*supra*) by J. Weisengoff.

⁵¹ This judgment would consist principally in its ordinary dogmatic definitions, guided both by Scripture and tradition and the inter-relation between the two. The Church seldom touches on the meaning of Scripture in itself since her primary purpose is to pass judgment on the data of revelation, irrespective of its scriptural or traditional origin.

⁵² *RB* 9 (1900), 142.

Therefore, by way of summary, because of the identity of (divine) authorship and the unity of the Spirit teaching in both Scripture and Tradition,⁵³ there are reciprocal relations between Scripture and Scripture (spiritual sense), and Scripture and Tradition (supra-literal sense) resulting in a teaching foreseen and arranged by God.

The spiritual sense, then, is obtained through a collation, comparison and development of biblical texts, the final resultant being the divine teaching. The supra-literal sense (as part of the spiritual sense) is obtained through a collation, comparison of a biblical text with an allied doctrine developed in Tradition.

In either case, the *sensus plenior* is excluded since God does not wish to teach anything else *from the text* except that inherent in the literal sense. "There are no leaves on acorns!" The spiritual and supra-literal senses would result from a *further* clarification or development, made known either by another biblical text (spiritual sense), or by divine tradition (supra-literal sense).⁵⁴

For a more thorough understanding of what P. Lagrange means by this sense, let us quote the end of his introduction to *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc*:

Nous avons hélas! conscience d'offrir au lecteur un commentaire beaucoup plus littéraire que théologique. Sans oublier jamais le caractère sacré d'un livre dont Dieu est l'auteur, nous avons poursuivi, aussi avant que nous avons pu, l'étude du style et l'humble sens grammatical des phrases et même des mots, essayant de comprendre tout le travail humain auquel saint Luc s'est livré. Rien ne nous serait plus flatteur et plus agréable que de voir un théologien accorder quelque crédit à cette étude, et s'en servir pour pénétrer plus avant dans l'intelligence de la Parole de Dieu. Non *omnia possumus omnes*.⁵⁵

⁵³ It is interesting to note that the word "dictavit" is used in tradition and by the Councils for both Scripture and tradition. (Cf. esp. *EB* 42 and 109.) Cf. A. Bea, *De Inspiratione et Inerrantia Sacrae Scripturae* (Romae, 1935), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁴ In this respect, there would be a close analogous treatment with what we call the typical sense. The type is made known *and taught* through a later text, or by the Church alone.

⁵⁵ *L'Évangile selon saint Luc* (Paris, Lecoffre, 1948), p. ii.

Therefore, P. Lagrange made no attempt at determining the supra-literal sense in Scripture. His work, strictly speaking, was a work of defense. His aim was to discover and make secure the truly literal meaning. P. Lagrange felt that work on the supra-literal sense belonged, rather, to a theologian who would use the strictly literal meaning and trace the effect of it in the Church. The Bible, then, is only a part, but an important recorded part, in this living dynamic movement towards truth through God's revelations.

Synthesis. Lagrange has maintained that the primary aim of inspiration is not to teach but to record the various stages of revelation and the historical facts which enable the order and sequence of revelation to be understood. We are now in a position, after reviewing his teaching on the literal and spiritual sense, to see the relation between inspiration and divine teaching. Inspiration not only leads to a fixing or recording of tradition—it also leads to a teaching. However, if the primary purpose of inspiration was to teach, then there would be a full and absolutely irrevocable correspondence between the human affirmation and God's affirmation, in all the stages of revelation—an obvious source of contradictions. But, if the primary purpose is to record, then the literal sense of the human author corresponds to that of the divine author only at a given stage of revelation and insofar as it corresponds to His ultimate purpose.⁵⁶ We find inferior ideas, for example, expressed in the Bible⁵⁷ as well as certain unusual ritual prescriptions⁵⁸ that militate against our more refined Christian conscience.

P. Lagrange writes:

If we consider the Spirit of God which inspired it, the Bible is the noblest of books; but its aim and object is not so lofty. God inspired the preservation of this teaching, but it is far inferior to the teaching we find throughout the Church. They are the *egena elementa* (Gal 4, 9),

⁵⁶ For a fuller explanation, cf. *infra*, 29-36, "Method of Divine Teaching."

⁵⁷ Ex 21, 24; Dt 19, 21: "tooth for a tooth, eye for eye"; Dt 2, 34: the famous *herem*.

⁵⁸ Nm 5, 11-31: the 'ordeal of jealousy.'

the words spoken to them of old: for us our Lord reserved more saving words. The facts speak for themselves.⁵⁹

God's teaching (since God teaches what the human author teaches) is ultimately determined by the various purposes of the Old Testament⁶⁰ as well as the method of divine teaching, which operates in a very human manner through the *status quo* of any given age.

But how can we determine God's teaching for us from the Bible? The variety of expression in which religious truth is clothed, the various stages and purposes of these religious truths considered in the light of Lagrange's spiritual sense should clearly indicate that the teaching of the Bible is very often the result⁶¹ (which may or may not correspond to the literal sense in a given passage), obtained through a thorough investigation of the entire Bible, the complete appreciation of which is extremely difficult. P. Lagrange, therefore, maintains that the interpretation of the Bible must be confided to the Church.⁶²

For a further explanation, Lagrange uses the analogy of the acorn and the oak.⁶³ The complete oak is already in the acorn, in pattern, *in potentia*. However, the acorn is only an acorn. If you went up to an uncivilized and scientifically ignorant savage and said, "Look, this acorn has leaves on it!" he would undoubtedly be amazed and look at you as the one in need of help. But you insist,

⁵⁹ *Historical Criticism*, p. 101.

⁶⁰ E.g. to bring about a moral and dogmatic development leading up to Christ, the *pleroma*; to keep the idea of sin as a moral transgression alive.

⁶¹ "Die inspirierten Verfasser wollten daher sicher nicht jede Einzelheit dieser Quellen für sich gesondert verbürgen, sondern zunächst alle Einzelheiten zusammen als richtige Darstellung und Milieubeschreibung der erzählten Vorgänge oder doch nur solche Einzelheiten gesondert, die für den besondern Zweck ihres Buches wichtig waren." J. Schildenberger, *Vom Geheimnis des Gotteswortes* (Heidelberg, 1950), p. 303.

⁶² *Historical Criticism*, p. 102. This does not derogate from the literal sense of a passage with its purpose at a given stage of revelation, but manifests, over and above this, the resultant teaching of the Bible, which is to be perpetuated by the Church.

⁶³ *Historical Criticism*, p. 65 ff.

“But it *has* leaves; one day you will find out that I am right.” Yes, it has leaves, *in potentia*, but actually it is only an acorn. To recognize the complete beauty of the oak in God’s providential design we must see it in the various stages of its development. First, as an acorn, then as a young sapling and finally as the full grown tree. To follow the analogy, the Old Testament is in the New and the New Testament cannot well be explained without the Old. We are, by no means, to discard the Old Testament as “old Hebrew clothes.” To have the fully developed New Testament without the gradual evolvement of the Old is to miss the beauty of God’s providential plan. However, to see the New Testament actually in the Old is the same as putting leaves on acorns. Yet the New Testament is in the Old, *in potentia*. Herein lies the beauty of the gradual development of revelation. It is God who draws out the events. He unrolls the ages; He knows to what part of His plan in the future a past event corresponds. In relating a first deed, He knows its importance and connection with the second. In this way we can see the New Testament in the Old. Christ is the completeness of Revelation, the *pleroma* of all truth, dogmatic and moral. We see Christ in the Old Testament in embryo, since in God’s plan all things lead up to Him.⁶⁴

It has been shown that the primary aim of inspiration is not to teach but rather to preserve the memory of revealed truths, and the historical facts which give a greater and more complete understanding to these truths. It is only on these premises that we can understand the conclusion that the “Bible’s *principal* aim is religious truth.”⁶⁵ But how are religious truths taught in the Bible? What is the method of divine teaching? This is of utmost importance; to answer it we must look at the Bible itself.

Method of Divine Teaching. In our treatment, we shall confine

⁶⁴ This concept has the advantages of the *sensus plenior* without its artificiality and its difficulties. (Cf. *CBQ* 14 [1952], 83-85). May not a study of Lagrange’s concept of the unity of Revelation (together with his spiritual sense) act as a basis for a mutual understanding between exegetes and theologians in the Scriptural interpretation of dogmatic passages? We need not press texts to prove doctrine—it is sufficient to show, in some instances, the worth of a text in the development of a doctrine.

⁶⁵ *Historical Criticism*, p. 104.

ourselves to two items, which, though distinct, are interdependent: (a) the accommodation of the Divine Teacher, who works providentially through the social and historical conditions of a given age and, (b) the use of vehicles to portray religious truth.

By accommodation. It should be quite evident, in examining the Bible, that its teaching is not found in ready-made theses, standing in a state of splendid isolation. It is, rather, mingled with numberless stories, discussions, poetical effusions, anecdotes, prayers, and metaphors. These are frequently secondary elements which serve to clothe the truth, or "to serve as a sounding board of the lyre." In some cases these secondary elements may be based on erroneous notions (e.g., biblical cosmogony). We must remember that the Jewish people were not a *tabula rasa* upon whom God impressed His revelation. He took them as they were and worked through them. The Spirit of God, then, used the radically incomplete ideas, the illusions of the Jews, without ever adopting, i.e., identifying Himself with an erroneous opinion. It may be said that He leaned upon them, or better, that He glided over them, even as do the rays of sunshine glide over a faulty mirror, or a pool of muddy water, without thereby contracting any stain.⁶⁶ God acts, as it were, through the sociological, psychological and philosophical attitudes of a given age in Jewish history, not above them.

Through vehicles. Hence, God accommodates Himself, as it were, to the inconsistent ideas, the false illusions of man, as vehicles that would be acceptable in a given age to portray religious truth. But is this a wise pedagogy? When a teacher wishes to teach a child a certain science, astronomy, for example, he proceeds step by step, not being able to convey at once the whole of his knowledge to the mind of his pupil. Before he can go forward, he must have a starting-point, and so the ideas already in the mind of the child will have to serve as the foundation of all his teaching. These ideas are the only material, the only forces to set the mind in motion and cause it to go forward. When a teacher has to enter the mind of

⁶⁶ P. Lagrange, in dealing with the "method of divine teaching" frequently quotes and makes use of a small book, written by a Dominican, which I have not been able to find: P. Lacome, *Quelques considérations exégétiques sur le premier chapitre de la Genèse*. It was published with the full approval of Père Monsabré in 1891 (cf. *Historical Criticism*, p. 104).

his pupil, he tries to discover the weird and foolish ideas it has; and when he has found them, he makes use of them to inculcate some glimpse of truth. In order to help him digest the first lessons of astronomy, for example, he goes back to the myths and gropings of old; he personifies the sun, speaks of its going forth in its daily course from its rising to its setting. But can it be fairly said that in so doing the teacher approved of all the illusions that filled that youthful mind? Now, in the Bible, the Holy Spirit is such a Master, such a Teacher. He is the Teacher in the midst of the other teachers of this world; He uses their method. He has a teaching of His own supernatural knowledge which He wishes to impart to man in a way best suited to him in his age.

The human familiarity of the Divine Teacher is well expressed by P. Lacome, quoted by Lagrange:

With the sole qualification of Teacher of Divine Science, she (the Wisdom of God) came, and established her chair by the side of other chairs; in the public places and cross-roads she gathered together all the passers-by without any distinction, and to them she set forth her teaching; she marked out her own definite position, and outside that position she spoke the language of the people, as all great teachers of the human race have done. And if to man, who is all his life but a little child, she spoke in childish terms, and spelled out to him the mysteries of heaven, we really cannot blame her for his own stammering and in consequence, her whose teaching is so justly pure and lofty. Our own ignorance should be blamed.⁶⁷

P. Lagrange referred to and quoted P. Lacome at length to substantiate his views on the essential distinction between the divine teaching and the vehicle (adapted to a given age) used to make that truth known. It would be stupid for a teacher of geometry, points out Lagrange, to tolerate in his pupils wrong ideas about a straight line. But, on the other hand, need a teacher of grammar trouble himself about the truth of the examples cited to illustrate a rule?⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Proof from Scripture. These distinctions are not mere conjectures, nor *a priori* theories, claims P. Lagrange. They are based on biblical facts. Accommodation of Scripture, for instance, is used as a vehicle by the sacred writers themselves. St. Paul frequently accommodates Scripture for his own purpose, reminiscent of the methods of rabbinical Judaism;⁶⁹ so do the Evangelists. We read in Mt 2, 17 ff., for example, about the massacre of the Holy Innocents: "Then was fulfilled (eplérōthē) what was spoken by Jeremias the Prophet saying: 'A voice was heard in Rama, weeping and loud lamentation; Rachael weeping for her children. . . .'" Is this not a mere application based upon the similarity of the incidents? It can scarcely be a fulfillment in the true sense of the word. The expressed similarity, therefore, was the vehicle to portray the divine teaching. The teaching is the important thing; the vehicle is accommodated.⁷⁰

Authority in Faith. Basic to an understanding of these distinctions is the importance of authority in faith. In a logical argument, each proposition is an essential element and is truly the reason leading to the conclusion. Authority, however, through faith operates differently. Reason is certainly used (e.g. in the motives of credibility), but it is only a scaffolding which may be removed, for the vault is self-supporting.⁷¹ So it is with the Divine Teacher in Scripture. Genius need not argue, it simply states. God teaches nothing false, nor does He base Himself upon anything false as an essential element of His teaching. He is free, however, to

⁶⁹ 1 Cor 9, 9 (Dt 25, 4); 1 Cor 10, 1-6 (Ex 13, 22; 14, 22; 16, 4.35; 17, 6; Nm 20, 11); 2 Cor 3, 15.16 (Ex 34, 34); Gal 3, 16 (Gn 13, 15; 17, 7; 24, 7); Gal 4, 21-31 (Gn 16, 5; 17, 16-19; 18, 10-14; 21, 1-2); Heb. 1, 5-13 (Ps 2, 7; 2 Sm 7, 14; Ps 97, 7; 104, 4; 45, 6-7; 102, 25-27; 110, 1); Heb 11, 13-15 (Gn 23, 4). These are but a few examples.

⁷⁰ This type of vehicle would particularly appeal to the Jews under the influence of their rabbinical method of teaching. For a very interesting and enlightening article on inspiration and citations cf. Louis Pirot, "Citations," *DBS* (Paris, 1934), col. 23-51. Lagrange's "accommodated figurative" sense is accepted as a legitimate vehicle.

⁷¹ *Historical Criticism*, p. 109. (Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Revelatione*,⁵ vol. 1 [Romae: Desclée, 1950], pp. 65-125.)

make use of our scientific or historical ideas⁷² merely as a means of preparing our minds. It would be similar to the use of a parable to illustrate a certain point.

In the light of these principles, difficulties with St. Paul's type of argumentation are cleared up. What if he does cite Scripture from the LXX when the latter differs in meaning from the M.T.? What if he does argue according to the opinions or even the prejudices of the Jews in his own day? The teaching is the important thing; the "clothing" depends upon its acceptance in a given age.

Our Lord's example. Our Lord Himself seems to have done this. Notice the *proof* He gives for the resurrection in Mk 12, 26: "But as to the dead rising, have you not read in the book of Moses about the bush, how God spoke to him saying: 'I am the God of Abraham. . . !' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Our Lord is not saying that Abraham had already risen from the dead. And yet, according to Midrash exegesis,⁷³ His argument yielded a sound conclusion: the living God cannot be called after the dead, unless he *intends* to call those dead back to life again. For the Jews, the argument was conclusive, though not strictly based upon the text. The Son of God knew what He had to do. And He stands out still more in confounding the Sadducees by a simple answer than in crushing them by an irrefragable and strictly logical argument.⁷⁴ Remember, the type of vehicle depends upon a given age.

⁷² Lagrange maintained three types of history in the Bible (*RB* 5 [1896] 510 ff.). (1) History of origins (*Gn* 1-11), whereby *on occasion* the "legendary" or "national popular tradition" may be used as a clothing to portray religious or historical truth. (2) Historical novel (e.g. *Jonas*), whereby some religious truth is better inculcated. (3) True history, not merely for the sake of detailing history but for manifesting some religious truth or motive—history for a purpose. All history is to be put in this third category unless sufficient reasons warrant another category. (Cf. pp. 86-96 of the complete dissertation for a defense and development of these three types.)

⁷³ Midrash exegesis is an imaginative development of a thought or theme suggested by Scripture. Cf. I. Epstein, "Foreword," *Midrash Rabbah*, tr. by Freeman and Simon, v. 1 (London, Soncino Press, 1939), pp. ix-xxii.

⁷⁴ *Historical Criticism*, p. 110.

Our Lord's method of teaching may seem faulty to students whose aim is to satisfy their intelligence and to make scientific progress. What our Lord demands, though, is submission to His words, and His truthfulness is the ultimate reason of the beliefs He imposes and of the laws He lays down.

Conclusion. Therefore, concludes Lagrange, if St. Paul and even our Lord argued from Scripture according to the mental habits of the Jews; if the Apostles set forth fulfillment of prophecy based on the similarity of incidents—can we not conclude, with even more probability, that current Jewish ideas in matters literary and scientific were used without trying to rectify them? If the Author of our Faith used such a pedagogical method, could we not presume that the sacred writers adopted a similar course, according to the customs of the times, in their exposition of divine teachings?⁷⁵

Not a new method. P. Lagrange insists that this is no new method. St. Augustine, in fact, had already conceived it; St. Thomas moulded it; Leo XIII in his encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus*, has consecrated it. To St. Augustine is attributed the following, which is quoted by Leo XIII in his encyclical:

Spiritum Dei, qui per ipsos loquebatur, noluisse ista
(videlicet intimam adspectabilium rerum constitutionem)
docere homines, nulli saluti profutura.⁷⁶

St. Thomas tells us that the sacred writer “ea secutus est, quae sensibiliter apparent.”⁷⁷ Therefore, the sacred writers had no in-

⁷⁵ *Historical Criticism*, p. 111.

⁷⁶ *EB* 106 (St. Aug., *De Gen ad litt.*, 2, 9.20 [P. L. 34, col. 270-271]). It is interesting to note that St. Augustine in this passage refers only to the appearance of the sky—God stretches the sky as a skin. On other points when speaking about the firmament, St. Augustine tried to reconcile the literal teaching. Leo XIII, although quoting the above from St. Augustine, nevertheless intends the meaning that has been extended by Christian tradition.

⁷⁷ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 70, a. 1, ad 3 (*EB* 106). It would be misleading, however, in illustrating St. Thomas' teaching, to say that the sacred author in speaking according to outward appearances *speaks truly* (as Brucker did, *Études* [1895] 502). P. Lagrange, rather, goes to the root of the problem. It would be more correct, he says, to say that in such cases the

tention of penetrating the secrets of nature, but rather described and dealt with things in more or less figurative language, or in terms which were commonly used and understandable at the time. We still use some of these phrases when we speak of the sun as rising and setting. The *Providentissimus Deus* tells us that the sacred writers described what appeared to their senses and in the way men could understand and were accustomed to understand.⁷⁸

* * * * *

In a development of Lagrange's views on inspiration (in relation to exegesis), we have attempted to synthesize the following concepts into an organic whole:

- I. Inspiration leads both to a Record and to a Teaching.
 - A. As a record, we discover the marvelous dynamic development of revelation, without being wedded to any particular stage in that development.
 - B. As a teaching, we discover not only the literal sense, adapted to a given age but we discover God's resultant ultimate revelation, i.e., Christ, both *in potentia* and *in actu*, through the spiritual sense.
- II. However, in determining the teaching in any given age, we must, in facing biblical facts, adhere to the divine method of instructing:
 - A. God has taken the Jewish race, not as a *tabula rasa* upon which He impressed His revelation, but as a people

Bible is neither right nor wrong since it *makes no judgment* in the matter. This method safeguards the possibilities wherein the sacred author is describing not according to outward appearances (e.g., the earth floats on the lower waters [Gn 1, 7-10], but according to another literary device, or according to popular tradition e.g., the hare is a ruminant [Lv 11, 6; Dt 14, 7]). The sacred author, therefore, is in no way trying to teach; he simply and off-handedly uses the language and notions of his day—there is no affirmation. However, we can determine that the sacred author had false notions in mind even though he does not *ex professo* teach them. A distinction can be made, therefore, between the *objective* sense (affirmed by the author) and the *subjective* sense (unaffirmed notions). (Cf. E. Arbez and J. Weisengoff, *The Nature of Inspiration* [In Manuscriptu] [Washington], p. 28.)

⁷⁸ Esp. *EB* 106.

among other peoples who had radically incomplete and illusory notions.

- B. The Spirit of God used vehicles, acceptable in a given age, to portray religious truth.
- C. He accommodated Himself by operating providentially through a concatenation of social, religious and natural catalysts, to lead men to the Truth.
 - a. This accommodation is exemplified by Christ Himself, the Evangelists, and St. Paul. Tradition, too, has always recognized it.
 - b. Fundamentally, divine accommodation and the use of vehicles rest on the authority of faith, i.e., truth is based on God's word and not necessarily on the objective and logical validity of a proposition.

Conclusion. There is an obvious need for the reconsideration of scriptural teaching (especially in the field of Old Testament theology) as a result of the greater knowledge we now have of the Orient and its ways. Lagrange, whose views are a development of what is truly traditional,⁷⁹ has pointed out a method—a method that presents a solidity and an elasticity to the exegete and the theologian that, to this writer's knowledge, is unique. The solidity offered results in a basic understanding of God's providential plan of gradual revelation, coupled with His evident purpose of an inspiration that records—all based on biblical facts. The elasticity offered results in a freedom of interpreting the teaching of Sacred Scripture in accordance with this fragmentary and partial revelation—a teaching whose literal sense is adapted to the type of literature and pedagogical methods of a given age (and at times a teaching given only for a certain age)—a teaching whose spiritual sense brings a harmony and a living unity between the two testaments. Lagrange's views, then, demand our serious consideration and attention. They can, in fact, unify discordant elements between Catholic exegetes and theologians. They may, further, prove attractive to sincere, though logically severe, critics of the Catholic view of biblical inspiration.

⁷⁹ To prove this was the burden of Chapter III.

CHAPTER VI

INFLUENCE OF P. LAGRANGE

We have endeavored to give P. Lagrange's ideas on inspiration and to show the influence of these ideas on biblical interpretation. As we have noted,¹ the influence of his psychological analysis of inspiration has been widely felt. The influence of his exegetical methods, too, which are at the same time based on and yet help form his theory of inspiration,² has been strong. His influence, apparently, is even increasing.³

Baptizer of modern criticism. The greatest influence of P. Lagrange lies, perhaps, in his inauguration, or at least in sparking the new movement⁴ which led Catholic biblical scholars out of the

¹ Cf. Chapter III, *passim*.

² Lagrange had no aprioristic theory of inspiration, as such. He argued from biblical facts. The exigencies of a sound exegesis formed and were formed into a traditionally accepted theory of inspiration. He, therefore, united the deductive and inductive methods into one system.

³ Cf. a few modern works: J. Chaine, *Le Livre de la Genèse* (Paris, 1949). Chaine relies strongly on Lagrange both for his ideas on inspiration (cf. esp. pp. 503-513), and his exegesis; "L'oeuvre exégétique et historique du P. Lagrange," *Cahier de la Nouvelle Journée* (Paris, 1935), which was devoted entirely to him; *Père Lagrange and the Scriptures*, tr. R. T. Murphy (Bruce, 1946); F. M. Braun, *L'oeuvre du Père Lagrange* (Fribourg, 1943). For a host of articles precipitated by the death of Lagrange, cf. R. T. Murphy, *CBQ* 3 (1941), 135.

Lagrange's influence likewise is increasing among non-Catholic critics. "He is more and more held in high regard as an eminent critic by those outside the Catholic Church, despite the fact that he was one of her most devout and loyal sons. His life and work prove that one can be a first-class Catholic and a first-class critic at one and the same time." (*Mémorial-Lagrange*, "Catholic Tradition and Biblical Criticism" by E. J. Byrne [Paris: Lecoffre, 1940], p. 231.) Cf. esp. the almost continuous references to Lagrange in V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1953).

⁴ "Unter den Katholiken Frankreichs ist die Behandlung exegetischer Grundfragen zuerst in ein etwas lebhafteres Tempo gekommen, und bis

impasse created by a wrong attitude towards inspiration.⁵

In his day, matters biblical were in tremendous turmoil; rationalism and skepticism had joined hands with modernism; men like Loisy and Renan succumbed to the brilliance of an "enlightened" age.⁶ In such straits, a man of action was needed who was not only a spiritual giant, but an intellectual giant as well, with mastery in all the biblical sciences, one thoroughly grounded on the traditional as well as the "modern."⁷ Such a man we find in P. Lagrange, a master not only in almost every field of biblical studies: Oriental languages, archaeology, philology, but also in ancient history, both religious and political. Because of his reverence for the traditional, his penetrating analysis of the modern, his synthesis of the whole, he can be likened to a St. Augustine and a St. Thomas. He has truly been instrumental in baptizing modern criticism and making it the servant of the Bible. P. Lagrange was interested in all knowledge, confident that between the Bible and the sciences there could be no conflict, since God is author of both. Solid criticism has nothing to fear from a sound theology, he would say,⁸

in die neueste Zeit haben sozusagen sensationelle Momente nicht gesäumt, den oft erregt geführten Verhandlungen unter denselben neuen Stoff zur Debatte zu liefern. A. Houtin wird zwar kaum noch genannt, um so mehr aber A. Loisy; beider kritischer Überreifer hat eine autoritative Ablehnung erfahren. Dem nicht weniger energischen Forderer einer katholischen Bibelkritik, P. M.-J. Lagrange, O. Pr., hat dagegen weise Massigung und milde Form der Erörterung amtliche Duldung, wenn nicht Billigung einge tragen. Und was der wissenschaftlichen Bewegung ein gewisses dramatisches und spannendes Interesse zuführt in Msgr. Mignot sehen wir, wie bereits in früheren Phasen des Streites, auch neuestens wieder einen Bischof als Forscher und Gelehrten in die Arena herabsteigen, der auch einen Loisy trotz seines exegetischen Radikalismus noch nicht vollständig zu den Toten will, der aber mit Lagrange seine volle Übereinstimmung unzweifelhaft erkennen lässt." (Göttsberger, *Biblische Zeitschrift* 3 [1905], 225.)

⁵ RB 4 (1894), 571. Chaine tells us: "Avant les travaux du P. Lagrange sur l'inspiration, le système de Franzelin a joué d'une influence considérable." (*Op. cit.*, p. 504.)

⁶ Cf. *supra*, Chapter I, pp. 4-11.

⁷ "When others were carried off their feet by the rising tide of Naturalistic and Modernistic criticism, P. Lagrange not only held his head above the waters, but at the same time clung securely to the solid rock of Christian tradition. To him is largely due the stemming of the flood and the saving of many souls from being swept away by it." (E. J. Byrne, *loc. cit.*, p. 235.)

⁸ RB 4 (1895), 518.

nor does sound theology have anything to fear from true science.

Biblical criticism can flourish in the Church. To meet the demands as well as the findings of the modern critics, Lagrange set out to prove that true biblical criticism *can* exist in the church.⁹ We can point fearlessly to a man, shorn of all such titles as *Révérend Père*, and O.P.; we can point proudly to a man reduced to the neat scientific bareness of "Lagrange."¹⁰ Jean Guitton says:

In libraries where men claim to sift the chaff from the wheat, his books stand, impassive, heavy, fortified with all modern apparatus. They, too, bristle with machine guns, reinforcements, provisions, armament, color; and they are conceded to have a rightful place in the struggle.¹¹

Catholic biblical criticism, thanks in large measure to Lagrange, can now hold its head high among any true biblical critics.¹²

His works may be taken up and carried further,¹³ or they may

⁹ The fall of Renan and especially of Loisy goaded Lagrange on to show that a true biblical science can flourish in the Church.

P. Lagrange has rendered an inestimable service to many Christian universities who could have been easily led astray from the faith by what is called "Biblical Criticism" (cf. Jean Guitton in *Père Lagrange and the Scriptures*, *loc. cit.*, p. 170). See also, *Mémorial—Lagrange* (Paris, 1940) for a 384 page tribute to Lagrange and the effect of his school on modern scholarship.

¹⁰ To foster scientific study of the Bible, or perhaps, more correctly, to foster all studies that will contribute to a fuller and truer understanding of the Bible, P. Lagrange started the famous *École Biblique* in Jerusalem on November 15, 1890. The *Revue Biblique*, its official organ, began publication in January, 1892. It became also the official organ of the newly established Biblical Commission, to which P. Lagrange had been named consultor. The *Revue* continued as official organ from 1904 to 1908, when the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* was instituted.

¹¹ Jean Guitton, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹² We must confess, however, that actually Lagrange is not quoted by non-Catholic writers as frequently as his scholarship warrants. This is probably due to a biased view of Catholic biblical works.

¹³ The crown of his work would be a biblical theology which Lagrange hoped others (theologians) would do, based on his scientific research (cf. *Évangile selon Saint Luc*, Paris, 1948, p. 2). It would be, I think, a biblical

be corrected in part.¹⁴ Yet, he has left us more than works; even more than a method. He has given to the Church a *spirit* of confidence that true biblical criticism can flourish within it.

Catholic exegesis, previously, was forced to take the defensive, maneuvering rather clumsily at times. Lagrange's contribution was to start a biblical science, freed from the trammels of any merely scientific element, or rather, to make all sciences allied to the Bible, servants to its better understanding.

Historical Survey. At the turn of the century, most scholars of the "liberal school" were united, at least in their principles. Within a few years, however, divisions took place within the school itself in the application of these principles. Some advocated "relative truth"¹⁵ with various nuances of meaning;¹⁶ others rejected that principle, preferring a different approach.¹⁷ Some advocated the use of "implicit quotations,"¹⁸ others did not approve of it,¹⁹ or at least urged caution in their use. Some pro-

theology based on his spiritual sense, showing how the Bible is the medium in which the mind of the Church has been energized and developed, the nexus between Scripture and Tradition.

¹⁴ We must remember that Lagrange wrote voluminously, but always with an open mind for corrections. "Une erreur de précipitation nuira moins que l'inaction aux intérêts des âmes" was his motto. (RB 1 [1892], 3.) He presented his opinions in a spirit of humility, never as the last word (cf. esp. *Éclaircissement sur la méthode historique* [in manuscriptu], Paris, 1905, #101).

¹⁵ Loisy, it seems, is the first to propose "relative truth." In the sense in which he advocated it, however, it stands condemned. EB 242 (DB 2058).

¹⁶ Cf. Durand, *Dictionnaire apologétique* (Paris, 1915), col. 766 ff. for discussion of it.

¹⁷ Durand (*ibid.*, col. 766) thinks the term is too ambiguous. Lagrange, too, avoids the term and prefers a different approach to historical difficulties.

¹⁸ F. Prat, *La Bible et l'Histoire* (Paris, 1904), pp. 46 ff. An "implicit quotation" (in contradistinction to "explicit" quotations) is the use made of a quotation by an author without any explicit reference to its origin (cf. Vosté, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-138).

¹⁹ I. Götsberger, "Autour de la question biblique," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 3 (1905), 225; Hummelauer, *Exegetisches zur Inspirationsfrage* (Freiburg, 1904), p. 73.

posed the use of "narratives that have the appearance of history"²⁰ or "literary genre."²¹

Then came decrees from Rome, checking the unbounded zeal of the new movement. The Biblical Commission came out with restrictions on the use of "implicit quotations"²² and "history according to appearances."²³ It maintained the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.²⁴ It held, too, for the historical character of the first three chapters of Genesis.²⁵ The effect of these restrictions was salutary. The impetuosity of the "*schola larga*" was checked and matters were examined more fully and more circumspectly. The ground gained by the new school had to be reevaluated and solidified. The decree *Lamentabili*²⁶ and the encyclical *Pascendi*²⁷ as well as the Motu Proprio *Praestantia Scripturae*²⁸ also had their effects. A letter from the Consistorial Congregation to the Archbishop of Siena excluded the use of Holzhey's works in seminaries. Included in this exclusion were some of the works of Lagrange.²⁹ This too, curtailed the movement. Occasionally, books or articles appeared, touching on some of the principles advocated by the "*schola larga*"³⁰ yet, by and large, Catholic scholarship during this period was quite reserved and conservative.

The turning point. It seems, however, that the time of probation is over and that greater liberty is extended to Catholic exegetes. According to the latest biblical encyclical *Divino Afflante*

²⁰ "Narratives that have the appearance of history" are stories used by an author that *prima facie* seem to be historical but actually are "vehicles" used to teach some religious doctrine (cf. *supra*, pp. 54-56; also Vosté, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-117).

²¹ Lagrange, *RB* 5 (1896), 496-518.

²² *EB* 153 (February 3, 1905).

²³ *EB* 154 (June 23, 1905).

²⁴ *EB* 174-177 (June 26, 1905).

²⁵ *EB* 332-339 (June 30, 1909).

²⁶ *EB* 183-249 (July 3, 1907).

²⁷ *EB* 250-275 (September 8, 1907).

²⁸ *EB* 276-284 (November 18, 1907).

²⁹ Cf. *supra*, pp. 5-6 for fuller treatment.

³⁰ Cf. Junker, *Biblische Urgeschichte*, 1932. Cf. Edward Siegman, *CBQ* 5 (1943), 474-475.

*Spiritu*³¹ the principles used by the "schola larga" are able to serve biblical criticism and the Church. Further, the very important letter of the Secretary of the Biblical Commission to Cardinal Suhard has given a great impetus to the movement.³² Recent trends indicate that the seeds sown by the "new exegesis" at the turn of the century, followed by the period of maturation, have prospects of bearing abundant fruit.

* * * * *

Conclusion. We have presented P. Lagrange's ideas on inspiration; we have shown the effect of those ideas on his principles of exegesis. Certainly the influence of Lagrange as a promoter of the "new exegesis" has been tremendous. Some think that he is the greatest Catholic biblical scholar of the past hundred years or more, or even since the time of St. Jerome.³³ It is, however, too early to judge his exact and permanent influence.³⁴ We are too close to the battleground of his arena. However, his ideas on inspiration and his principles of exegesis (the two must never be separated) may well form the bulwark of the renewed "new exegesis."

³¹ *AAS* (1943), 300 ff.

³² *Ibid.* (1948), 45-48. (In this letter specific mention is made of three degrees of the Biblical Commission, concerning "narratives that have the appearance of history" [EB 154], apropos of the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch [EB 174-177], and regarding the historic character of the first three chapters of Genesis. These decrees, the Secretary goes on to say, were not meant to inhibit further study of these questions. In fact, sources in the Pentateuch are to be admitted, as well as special literary genre in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.) (Cf. p. 122, note 100 of the complete dissertation.)

³³ Cf. articles mentioned, *supra*, p. 37, note 3.

³⁴ Cf. R. Murphy, *Père Lagrange and the Scriptures*, *loc. cit.*, p. 143.

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